

# They Live in America, but America Lives Not in Them

## Three Million Deaf to the English Tongue, Five and a Half Million More Blind to the Printed Word—These Whom the Red Leaders Exploit Make Up Our Proletariat

By Herbert Kaufman

Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Interior in charge of Americanization

### We Demand—

- WE must not be tried by inquest.
- WE demand the right to vindicate the merit of our systems wherever their integrity is questioned or maligned.
- WE demand the right to regulate the cheating scales upon which the republic is weighed by its ill-wishers.
- WE demand the right to protect unintelligence from Esau bargains with hucksters of traitorous creeds.
- WE demand the right to present our case and our cause to the unlettered mass—whose benightedness and ready prejudices continually invite exploitation.
- WE demand the right to vaccinate credulous inexperience against Bolshevism and kindred plagues.
- WE demand the right to render all those whom we deem fit to fight for our flag, fit also to vote and to prosper under its folds.
- WE demand the right to bring the American language to every American, to qualify each inhabitant of these United States for self-determination, self-uplift and self-defence.

From Herbert Kaufman's appeal for the Americanization Bill.

THE following statement on the menace of alienism and illiteracy was made by Herbert Kaufman to the Senate Committee on Education and Labor only a few days before the beginning of the great steel strike. It is particularly interesting in view of the industrial struggle now going on—a struggle in which violent and revolutionary leaders have aligned for disruption purposes raw racial elements from all parts of the Old World—the un-American, the non-American, the anti-American, the ignorant and the illiterate. Mr. Kaufman for a year past has devoted himself and his whole time to the study of Americanism as special assistant to Franklin K. Lane, Secretary of the Interior, who has the subject close at heart.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I agree with you that this one hearing should be quite sufficient for this measure. The Smith-Bankhead bill or, to give it its popular name, the Americanization bill, has had its hearings before the American people and the testimony of the national press in support of the measure is the most eloquent plea for its enactment that we can offer you.

Our people want this bill—they want it now. The nation is impatient to deal with the problem. There can be no sense of security in the land until we have met the dual menace of ignorance and non-English speaking. Patriotic societies, chambers of commerce, labor unions, educators, manufacturers, health organizations and the most distinguished citizens of the Republic pray your prompt and favorable decision on Senator Smith's bill.

Discontent is mumbing and violence is ranting on all sides. America is on trial before ten thousand soap boxes; chaos is everywhere seek-

ing recruits from the ranks of misunderstanding and illiteracy.

As early as December, 1918, I anticipated a probable tendency to confuse the Old World's after-war conditions with our own unimpaired economic strength.

"The Allies have no 'rainy day' territory, no virgin regions to offer victory. There are no untrod miles left to adventure, no acreage, no franchises reserved to meet the intending liberalities of democracy.

"Yesterday was an Esau and sold multitude rights for a mess of tinsel and pageantry.

"Now the pottage-pot bargain must be revoked. The new freedom must assess privileged wealth and opportunity to require popular sacrifice and satisfy popular aspiration.

"But they must contain their operations within developed spaces.

**ILLITERACY is a pick-and-shovel estate, a life sentence to meniality. Democracy may not have fixed classes and survive.**

Their boundaries are fixed—no wilderness is behind their frontiers.

"The horizon, though, still beckons us—this is an unfinished land.

"Centuries and centuries to come shall reveal ever nobler chances to the Republic. America is a lusty young empire at whose rich bosoms uncounted multitudes shall nurse.

"What we have entrepreneurs in random spots will be measured as insignificant by the works which millions of vacant, lordless acres challenge approaching generations to create.

"However much others may despair of national destiny, if we but follow through, our futures are spangled with eternal stars."

Progress shall pay an ugly price if we do not promptly take means to offset "the take-away doctrines" of bankrupt Europe by proving this is still a land of boundless opportunity, where every willing, honest, earnest worker may always "make a way" for himself.

There is no reason for any man to doubt or discount his prospects here except it be lack of faith in our laws or ignorance of our reserve resources and his constitutional right to share them.

However, there are such folk—eight millions of them (according to the 1910 census) ten years of age and over—five millions of whom are native-born, yet cannot read or write English, and of those who do not speak it, at least half do not read or write any language.

But I do not consider this an accurate estimate. Recent investigations challenge it. I would not hesitate to double the figure. The outrageous percentage of illiteracy in the army suggests that no test of

**WITH 8,000,000 persons in America practically beyond the reach of inspiration and conference, unable to read an American document or newspaper, we tempt the agents of disruption.**

literacy was required by the census takers. Of 1,552,256 draftees examined by the War Department, 386,196, or 24.9 per cent, could not understand newspapers or write letters home.

To quote from "The New York Times" of March 9:

"For a country that has boasted of its enlightenment and has gloried in the possession of a common ideal of freedom and democracy the figures which the Surgeon General supplied to Congress the other day in support of the Smith-Bankhead bill provided something of a shock. Whereas the Census Bureau had led us to believe that the percentage of illiteracy was no greater than 8 per cent, the army figures for men of draft age put it at 24.9, or one-quarter of the population. While the report as first made seemed to indicate that in some cases, particularly in South Carolina, the

\* From "The Star-Spangled Future," Cosmopolitan Magazine.

white men were perhaps more illiterate than the negroes, it appears that there must have been some confusion in compilation, for it is now explained that at Camp Grant, for instance, the examination of white men alone resulted in the designation of 24.9 per cent for the so-called Beta test for illiterates, the figure reached 75 per cent for the negroes, and for 50,000 white and colored men combined the result was 29 per cent.

"The fact remains that of 1,552,256 men examined 386,196 were unable to read American newspapers or to write letters home to the family. They were unable to read and understand signs about the camp or to understand a written or printed order. In factories they would have been unable to understand signs and instructions intended to protect them from accident. The significance of this state of affairs can only be realized when it is stated that injuries in manufacturing establishments occur only half as frequently to those who can read as to those who cannot. Above all, it stands out that, while the soldier was supposed to be aware that he was fighting for the ideals of his country and to know at least the background of history out of which grew Germany's guilt, in plain truth he knew only so much as his next door neighbor told him, or, in a minority of the cases, what he could glean through the doubtful medium of the foreign language newspaper.

But we need not concern ourselves at the moment with the next tide of immigration. The horde that poured through our ports during the last decade first requires attention. These later comers have been especially unassimilable. For instance, only 8 per cent from Russia and 4 per cent from Greece within a five-to-nine-year period are naturalized, and of all the foreign-born wage-earners resident in America five years

**AN outbreak of hoof and mouth disease would compel instant remedial laws and funds to contain the menace within bonds. It is even more incumbent upon us to defend healthy citizenship against civic incapables.**

or more just 31 per cent are citizens and only 14 per cent additional have their first papers.

In response to a letter asking for surveys of their establishments 112 firms report to us a total of 48,598 foreign-born employees, of whom 15,285, or 31.4 per cent, are naturalized, which exactly corroborates the Labor Department's statistics I have quoted. One thousand eight hundred and seventy, or 3.8 per cent, have first papers, and 31,403, or 64 per cent, are still aliens. I have here a tabulation of the races included in the survey:

(See table at the end of this article—to be found on page eight)

The melting pot calls for watchful care, when we find that 94.3 per cent of Mexicans, 96.4 per cent of Bulgarians, 95 per cent of Romanians, 92 per cent of Greeks, 95 per cent of Croatians, 76 per cent of Armenians and 67 per cent of Austrians, employed by the concerns in question, are not subjects of the flag.

The same establishments have calculated the percentage of turnover among illiterates. The United States Aluminum Company estimates it at 20 per cent, the Goodyear Rubber Company at 30 per cent, Wilson & Co. at 30 per cent, the Fleishmann Malting Company at 50 per cent, the Nineveh Coal and Coke Company at 80 per cent, the Pfeister-Vogel Leather Company at 100 per cent, the Worthington Pump Company at 100 per cent, the Standard Roller Bearing Company at 200 per cent, the Baltimore Copper Smelting and Rolling Company at 300 to 400 per cent and the Grasselli Chemical Company at 395 per cent.

Strike an average and appreciate how closely ignorance and industrial unrest are related.

I have two lists the extent of which indicate the decision of big concerns to exclude from their shops and works all aliens and all who cannot read and write or talk our language. (Note—These two lists, referred to by Mr. Kaufman, contain (1) the names of fifty-eight firms, with number of employees, which will not employ illiterates, and (2) forty-two firms which will not employ unnaturalized citizens.) If we have cause

### The Americanization Bill

Its name officially is the Smith-Bankhead Bill, and its title is: "A bill to promote the education of native illiterates, of persons unable to understand and use the English language, and of other resident persons of foreign birth; to provide for co-operation with the states in the education of such persons in the English language, the fundamental principles of government and citizenship; the elements of knowledge pertaining to self-support and home-making and in such other work as will assist in preparing such illiterates and foreign-born persons for successful living and intelligent American citizenship."

For the present fiscal year ending June 30 \$5,000,000 is provided, and annually thereafter until 1926 \$12,500,000.

For the purpose of co-operating with the several states and preparing teachers, supervisors and directors there is immediately appropriated for the use of the several states for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1919, \$250,000, and thereafter \$750,000 annually.

To secure the benefits of this act each state shall equal its Federal appropriation.

No state shall participate until it has required the instruction for at least 200 hours a year of illiterate and non-English-speaking minors of sixteen and over.

Each state receives money in proportion to the number of its illiterates and of persons unable to speak, read or write English.

to worry over the present conditions, judge how much worse that situation will grow as this sentiment spreads and a great multitude finds ever-narrowing opportunity. How shall you answer them when they deny that America means liberty, that there is no discrimination here?

Sheer selfishness urges us to remove their disability. We cannot reduce living costs by constricting the labor supply—already insufficient; and we the same as reduce the supply of labor when we suffer the continuance of conditions which limits its general service.

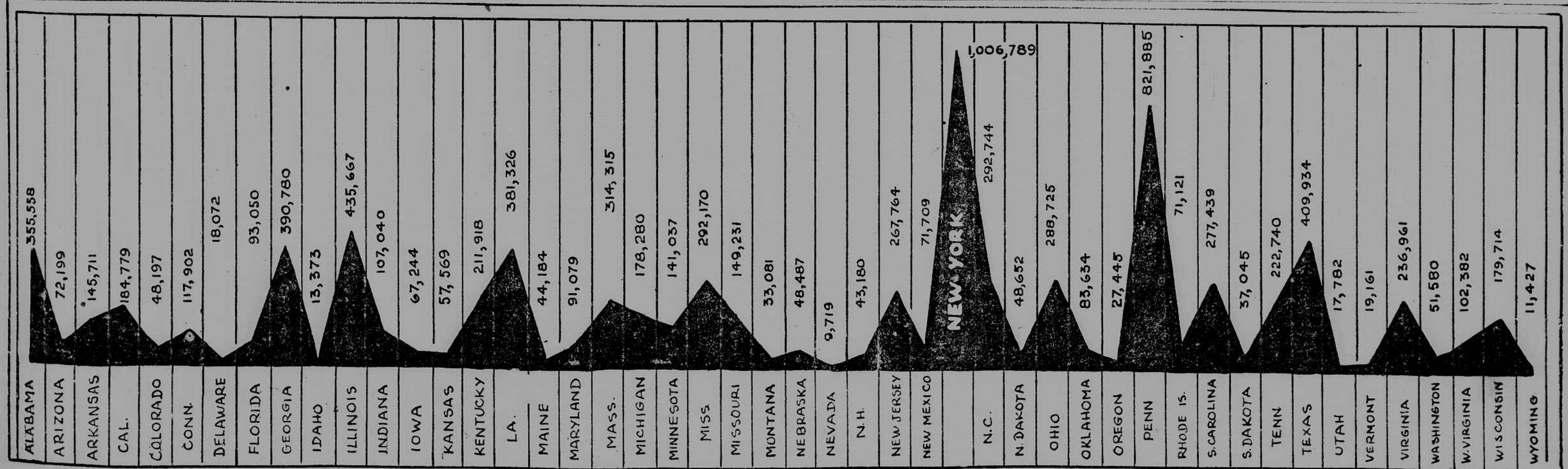
Even if we proceed on the basis of the inaccurate 1910 census; even if there are, as it claims, only eight millions of this class, that number exceeds Canada's entire population; is more than the whole popu-

**If a hundred million of us stand together, we must think together and that without foreign accent.**

lation of the South during the Civil War; is greater than the combined populations of Nevada, Wyoming, Delaware, Arizona, Idaho, Mississippi, Vermont, Rhode Island, North Dakota, South Dakota, Oregon, Maine, Florida, Connecticut and Washington; greater than all the men, women and children of all the cities in the United States west of the Mississippi, except one.

The South leads in illiteracy, but the North leads in non-English speaking. More than 17 per cent of the persons in the east-south Central States have never been to school. Approximately 16 per cent of the

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This graph illustrates the distribution of 8,500,000 illiterates and non-English speaking aliens by states. The peaks are New York and Pennsylvania. If the productive power of an illiterate be estimated at \$5 a week less than that of an educated worker, the nation is losing \$2,000,000,000 a year by illiteracy. In ten years that would cancel our war debt.